

SITUATION REPORT NO. 3
INCIDENT NO. 98-002 (Continuation of 97-015)
DATE: February 13, 1998 TIME: 2:00 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: 1997 spring flood statewide.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No change from previous reports.
3. DAMAGES: The National Weather Service (NWS) issued its Spring Snowmelt Flood Outlook narrative report on February 13. The outlook indicates that with current conditions and future normal precipitation and temperatures minor snowmelt flooding could occur in the Red River Valley. Minor snowmelt flooding is defined by the NWS as a general term indicating "minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public inconvenience." While river ice and soil frost levels are below normal, soil moisture is normal to above normal. The Red River has above normal base flows because of the region's high water table. The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) has reported that Red River water flows are 147 percent of normal at Wahpeton, 203 percent of normal at Fargo, and 230 percent of normal at both Grand Forks and Drayton. In the Red River Valley, snow depths range from 6 to 12 inches and have a snow water equivalent of one to three inches. In comparison to last year at this time, when record snowfall had occurred, the snow water equivalent was 4.5 inches in Fargo and 6 inches in Grand Forks.

Based on current conditions and normal future precipitation and temperatures, NWS hydrologists do not expect flooding to occur in the Missouri, James and Souris River Basins because of below normal runoff. Snow depths in these basins are below normal for this time of year. Soil moisture is below normal in the west and near normal in the east. All rivers, except for the Missouri River, have normal to below normal flows. Above average reservoir storage and releases have kept the Missouri River flow well above average.

Initial outlooks for the Red River, Missouri, James and Souris Rivers stipulate that the risk of flooding would increase if precipitation is significantly above normal or if heavy rains, rapid snowmelt, or ice jams occur.

The NWS expects Devils Lake to rise to 1,443.5 or 1,444 feet by May or June, according to the Spring Snowmelt Flood Outlook. This forecast is based on normal precipitation, evaporation and snowmelt rates. If spring weather is warmer and drier than normal, the crest could occur in May or June instead of mid-summer. The lake level is currently at 1,442.7 feet. Last July, the lake rose to 1,443 feet, the highest level in recorded history.

North Dakota has been experiencing a warm and dry winter because of El Nino, an unusual warming of eastern tropical Pacific Ocean waters that affects global weather patterns. As example, temperatures in Bismarck were 14 degrees above normal in December, 4 degrees above normal in January, and 15 degrees above normal for the first two weeks of February. Precipitation has been near normal in eastern North Dakota and below normal in the west. NWS meteorologists expect that the warmer temperatures should continue during March, April and May. Precipitation levels are expected to be normal to slightly below normal. Temperatures and precipitation levels are expected to return to normal by summer.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: A 12-member team of the Americorps National Civilian Community Corps has been assigned to Grand Forks to help flood victims organize and rebuild their homes. The members, sponsored by Lutheran Social Services/Lutheran Disaster Services, will help with sanding, painting, cleaning basements, and installing drywall, frames and flooring. The team will be in Grand Forks through February 20.

The Village Financial Services and Lutheran Social Services/Lutheran Disaster Response are sponsoring a free workshop in Grand Forks to help individuals and families prepare their 1997 tax returns. The workshop will be held from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on February 17 at Sharon Lutheran Church.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: The North Dakota State Flood Recovery Coordinator reported that a coordinated, senior-level interagency team will work with local governments to determine whether temporary levees should be removed, relocated or allowed to stay in place. Agencies represented include representatives of North Dakota Emergency Management, N.D. State Water Commission, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE).

Governor Schafer has appointed Maj. Gen. Murray Sagsveen as director of the N.D. Department of Health. Maj. Gen. Sagsveen assumed his new position on February 1. Since last June, he had served as the North Dakota State Flood Recovery Coordinator. He will continue to assist with recovery issues.

Staff representing the COE St. Paul District has presented two options for permanent protective measures to Grand Forks city officials. One portion calls for levee protection and is estimated to cost approximately \$300 million. The other is a levee-diversion combination with a preliminary price tag of \$932 million. City officials are expected to decide which option to select at a council meeting scheduled for February 26.

Governor Schafer has pledged that the State will pay half the local cost for construction of a permanent dike system for the city of Grand Forks. The Governor met with the Grand Forks Mayor on January 23 in Bismarck to discuss the project. The COE has not yet provided cost estimates for the project. A COE engineering team was directed by the Grand Forks City Council to develop two flood-protection options for the city, the dike system and a split-flow diversion. Governor Schafer emphasized that the permanent dike system project will require legislative approval either through the emergency commission, the state budget section or a special session of the State Legislature.

State, federal and local health officials are investigating the potential of an immediate threat to public health and safety resulting from basement heating oil contamination in Grand Forks. Approximately 400 Grand Forks homeowners reported fuel oil spills after last year's flood. This winter, with homes closed for the season, local officials indicate a few homeowners have reported possible fuel oil odors. FEMA has activated to date the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the U.S. Public Health Service to work in support of Grand Forks Public Health Service and N.D. Department of Health. The University of North Dakota (UND) will assist in conducting a health risk telephone survey of homeowners. An air sampling will then be conducted in a selected number of homes to determine exposure and toxicity levels. Homes that were not flooded will also be tested to determine background comparison levels.

Officials for the Bank of North Dakota (BND) and the city of Grand Forks recently announced modifications to BND's \$30 million Disaster Relief Loan Program. The program provides matching funds to business owners for restructuring existing debt, as well as new loans for working capital, inventory, capital improvements, equipment and expansion. The portion of the loan that BND carried was at 6 percent, while the lead bank could charge up to 9 percent on its share, resulting in an

effective rate of 7.5 percent. However, Grand Forks City Council recently approved a subsidized interest rate of 4 percent for both the BND and local lender portions of the loans for up to seven years. An estimated \$4.4 million will buy down the interest rate for businesses to 4 percent.

Grand Forks city and BND officials have also reported that BND recently received \$700,000 from the Affordable Housing Program of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Des Moines, Iowa. The application was made on behalf of Grand Forks Victory Rehabilitation Program to assist low-income residents with home repairs. Grants of up to \$15,000 will be made available to qualified families.

Seven employees of the N.D. Department of Agriculture have been recognized by the EPA for their efforts in collecting and disposing of agricultural chemicals during the 1997 Red River flood. The Department of Agriculture conducted a special Project Safe Send collection in the Red River Valley last May at sites in Wahpeton, Casselton, Grand Forks and Cavalier. Project Safe Send workers collected more than 90,000 pounds of agricultural chemicals from 120 participants.

FEMA is producing a 10-minute videotape outlining the hazard mitigation process. The videotape will feature Red River Valley officials and residents affected by the 1997 flood.

The city of Grand Forks has developed a home page on the Internet to provide updated information on flood recovery measures, long- and short-term flood protection measures, flood statistical information and photographs. The address is: <http://www.grandforks.com>.

As of February 11, the FEMA and State Emergency Management Public Assistance staff have received 4,249 Damage Survey Reports (DSRs) and have obligated funds for 3,863 DSRs. Survey work has been completed for 425 of the 440 applicants for the 1997 flood. More than \$117.8 million in infrastructure repairs, emergency work and debris removal has been determined to be eligible statewide.

Hazard mitigation specialists for North Dakota Emergency Management and FEMA are reviewing acquisition records for Cass County and the cities of Grand Forks, Wahpeton, Fargo and Pembina. The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has \$37 million available for projects designed to reduce or eliminate the risk of future flooding statewide. To date, nearly \$30 million has been approved, or is pending FEMA approval, acquisition of properties in floodplains and infrastructure projects to include sluice gates, flap gates and lift stations.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved a total of nearly \$181.4 million in low-interest loans for businesses and individuals. To date, the SBA has received 11,704 loan applications, 6,958 of which have been approved. Of the loans, 54 percent were to home owners and renters for real estate and personal property losses, and 46 percent were to business owners for repairs to businesses and for lost income.

To date, 24,476 awards have been approved for more than \$54 million in Disaster Housing assistance provided by FEMA.

The Individual and Family Grant Program (IFGP), administered by North Dakota Emergency Management, has approved more than \$14 million in grants to individuals for flood losses. The average IFGP grant is \$1,338. The staff has closed 23,244 cases. Of the more than 23,000 IFGP applications processed for grant awards, only 15 have been appealed by the applicants. Of those appeals, 11 were denied, one was paid in full and three are pending.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No change from previous reports.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.
9. OTHER: Other web site addresses for flood recovery information include:

N.D. Division of Emergency Management: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>
City of Grand Forks: <http://www.grandforks.com>

N.D. League of Cities: <http://www.ndlc.org>
N.D. State Water Commission: <http://water.swc.state.nd.us>
N.D. Attorney General Office: <http://www.state.nd.us/ndag>
N.D. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.state.nd.us/agr/>
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: <http://www.ncs-wc.usace.army.mil>
U.S. Geological Survey: <http://srv1dndbmk.cr.usgs.gov/public/index.html>

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